

SUMMARY

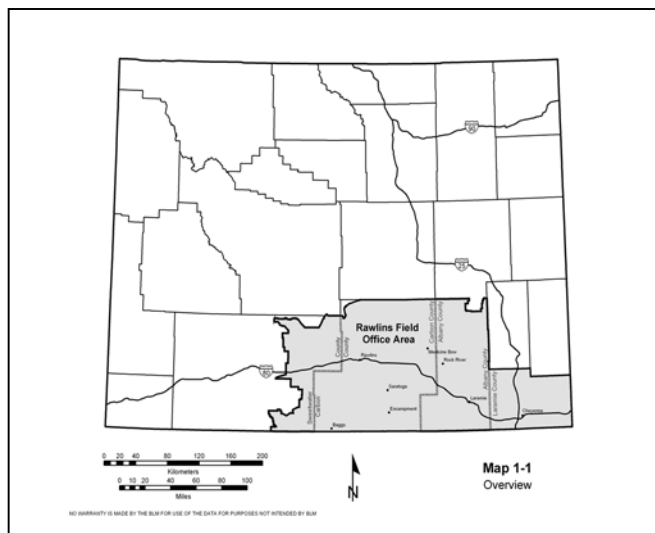
INTRODUCTION

This Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) documents the comprehensive analysis of alternatives for the planning and management of public lands and resources administered by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Rawlins Field Office (RFO) in Wyoming. The BLM RFO administrative area is located in south-central and southeastern Wyoming. The RFO includes approximately 11.2 million acres of land in Albany, Carbon, Laramie, and Sweetwater Counties.

Within that area, the RFO administers approximately 3.4 million acres of public land surface and mineral estate, 0.1 million acres of public land surface where the mineral estate is state or private, and 1.2 million acres of federal mineral estate where the surface is privately owned or state owned.

The public lands and federal mineral estate within the Rawlins Resource Management Plan Planning Area (RMPPA) are the subject of the planning effort and this associated EIS document. Neither this document nor the RFO's current land use plan applies to lands or minerals within the RMPPA that are administered by federal agencies other than BLM, such as the U.S. Forest Service, the Bureau of Reclamation, and the U.S. Air Force.

This DEIS provides analysis of potential management direction for important resource values and resource uses within the RMPPA, and allocates the use of public lands for multiple-uses. The DEIS also provides management direction for the protection of certain resources while allowing for leasing and development of mineral resources, livestock grazing, and other activities at appropriate levels.



BACKGROUND

The Great Divide RMP, approved by the Wyoming BLM State Director on November 8, 1990, currently covers the public lands included in the Rawlins RMP. The Great Divide RMP provides guidance and direction for management of BLM-administered public land surface and federal mineral estate.

The purpose of the Rawlins RMP Revision and EIS is to replace the existing Great Divide RMP, and to address the deficiencies described in the Great Divide RMP Evaluation (see Section 1.2.3). The Rawlins RMP will provide the overall management direction for the public lands and resources administered by the Rawlins Field Office. Adequate decisions from the Great Divide RMP will be carried forward to the revised plan.

The Great Divide RMP includes five Wilderness Study Areas (WSA)—Encampment River Canyon, Prospect Mountain, Bennett Mountains, Adobe Town, and Ferris Mountains; four Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC)—Jep Canyon, Como Bluff, Shamrock Hills, and Sand Hills; three Wild Horse Herd Management Areas (HMA)—Adobe Town, Stewart Creek, and Lost Creek; and three Special Recreation Management Areas (SRMA)—Continental Divide National Scenic Trail, North Platte River, and Shirley Mountain Caves. Major land uses include mineral development, wildlife habitat, wild horse use, livestock grazing, and recreation.

ISSUES AND CONFLICTS

The identified issues are based upon the demands, concerns, conflicts and problems involving the use or management of the public lands and resources within the RMPPA. The following planning issues were identified through public scoping and other public outreach efforts. Issues were also identified through an evaluation of the Great Divide RMP completed by the BLM on July 5, 2001. Planning issues and conflicts between various resources and activities addressed in the Rawlins RMP include:

- Energy resource development (i.e., oil & gas, coal, solar, and wind energy) and related transportation network conflicts with other land and resource uses and values (wildlife habitats, recreation values, sensitive vegetation types & sensitive watersheds).
- There are unique areas or sensitive lands and resources in the RMPPA that meet the criteria for protection and management under special management designations. There are also concerns that special management area designations may result in too many restrictions on the use of the public lands.
- Resource accessibility relates to the value or usability of some resources. To be used, resources must be accessible (legally and physically) and manageable.
- New demands are being placed on public lands due to growth in and around some cities, town, and rural subdivisions in the RMPPA. Considerations include balancing development with the desire for open space.
- Attention is needed where development activities may conflict with special status species and their habitat requirements.
- Federal and state requirements for water quality warrant additional attention as the RMP is implemented and updated.
- There are conflicting demands for consumptive (livestock, wildlife, and wild horse grazing and vegetation removal for development activities) and non-consumptive (watershed protection, soil stabilization, wildlife habitat) uses of the vegetation resource.
- Recreation uses and demands are increasing. Certain areas and resources need protection while others need to be considered for more public and recreation uses.

Actions taken under the Great Divide RMP created land use patterns and valid existing rights that influence options for future management. For example, many of the oil and gas resources in the planning area have been leased. The presence of these valid existing rights will affect the management choices available for BLM to consider in developing the Rawlins RMP. Alternatives will address potential stipulations to be attached to new leases or leases to be re-offered if existing leases are relinquished, the availability of unleased lands for future oil and gas leasing, and additional mitigation measures to be considered in reviewing Applications for Permits to Drill.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAFT EIS ALTERNATIVES

Chapter 2 describes four alternative resource management plans: the No Action Alternative (Alternative 1—Continuation of Existing Management direction) and three action alternatives, Alternative 2 (Emphasis on the Development of Resources), Alternative 3 (Emphasis on Protection of Resources, and Alternative 4 (Conservation Alternative – Preferred Alternative). The No Action Alternative (Continuation on Existing Management) includes direction provided by the Great Divide RMP (November 1990) as well as new direction and policy that have been developed since completion of the Great Divide RMP and resulting amendments to the plan. The three action alternatives were developed to present a range of management options. Each alternative management plan is intended to minimize adverse impacts on cultural and natural resources while providing for compatible resource use and development opportunities, as consistent with current law, regulation, and policy.

No Action Alternative

The No Action Alternative is a continuation of the current management direction. Ongoing programs initiated under existing legislation, regulations, and in the Great Divide RMP would continue. Thus, the No Action Alternative (Alternative 1) describes the current resource and land use management direction in the RMPPA. The No Action Alternative and its impact analysis represent the baseline to which the other management alternatives and their associated analyses are compared. Management actions proposed under the No Action Alternative are presented in Table 2-1.

Alternative 2 (Development of Resources)

Alternative 2 provides expanded opportunities to use and develop resources found within the RMPPA. This alternative emphasizes development and intensive management, while placing less emphasis on environmental protection. Resources would be protected to the extent required by applicable laws and regulations. Development and activities would occur throughout the RMPPA as proposed through management actions consistent with existing BLM guidelines. Management actions proposed under Alternative 2 (Emphasis on the Development of Resources) are presented in Table 2-1.

Alternative 3 (Protection of Resources)

Alternative 3 changes the mix of opportunities to use, develop, and manage resources. The alternative emphasizes: the improvement and protection of habitat for wildlife and sensitive plant and animal species; improvement of riparian areas and water quality; preservation of unique genetic phenotypes in the Lost Creek HMA; increase in designation of ACECs and SMAs; and protection of historic and cultural sites. Development of resources within the RMPPA would occur with intensive management of surface disturbing activities. Management actions proposed under Alternative 3 (Emphasis on Protection of Resources) are presented in Table 2-1.

Alternative 4 (Conservation Alternative-Preferred Alternative)

The Preferred Alternative provides a balance for opportunities to use and develop resources within the RMPPA while ensuring environmental conservation. The preferred alternative provides the guidance that emphasizes neither resource use nor resource protection. This balanced alternative best meets the issues and concerns raised during scoping. The preferred alternative represents the management actions recommended by the Field Manager to the State Director as the actions that best resolve planning issues within the RMPPA and that best promote balanced multiple use objectives. Management actions proposed under the Preferred Alternative are presented in Table 2-1.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

The environmental consequences that could result from the management prescriptions of the four alternatives are described in Chapter 4 and are summarized and compared in Table 2-2, Summary of Impacts. These potential consequences are discussed for each resource program, providing an analysis of environmental effects resulting from management of all resources and resource uses. This includes an analysis of cumulative effects, which are defined as the impacts that result from the incremental impact of an action when added to other past, present, or reasonably foreseeable future actions.

OVERVIEW OF THE PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

Key points of the Preferred Alternative are listed below.

Air Quality

BLM would minimize, within the scope of its authority, any emissions that may add to atmospheric deposition, cause violations of air quality standards, or degrade visibility. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) would provide oversight responsibility during this process and would approve the State of Wyoming SIP. State standards enforced in the RMPPA would be as strict or stricter than federal standards. Special requirements to alleviate air quality impacts would be considered on a case-by-case basis in processing land use authorizations. BLM would cooperate with the operation of the National Atmospheric Deposition Program (NADP)/National Trends Network atmospheric deposition monitoring site, as well as in the collection of basic climate and meteorological data from remote automatic weather stations.

Cultural Resources

Cultural resources would be identified and protected on a case-by-case basis, according to site-specific needs.

Cultural properties eligible for National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) listing would be managed for preservation of cultural and historic values. Where the setting contributes to NRHP eligibility, actions that diminish the visual integrity of the property's significant historic features would not be allowed within ¼ mile of the cultural property or the visual horizon, whichever is closer. Unevaluated portions of the setting would be protected until a cultural inventory is completed.



Fire and Fuels Management

BLM would conduct wildland fire suppression and fuels management activities to first provide for firefighter and public safety. Public lands within the checkerboard or other intermixed landownership areas would be managed to protect private property. This would most often result in fire suppression activities. Wildland fire suppression activities in the remainder of the RMPPA would be managed for AMR. AMRs for SMAs would protect or enhance the relevant and important values for the ACEC or SMA. A high priority for fire management activities would be given to areas identified as:

- communities at risk (as identified in Federal Register, Volume 66, Number 3, 2001)
- industrial interface areas
- areas of high priority resource values within the RMPPA

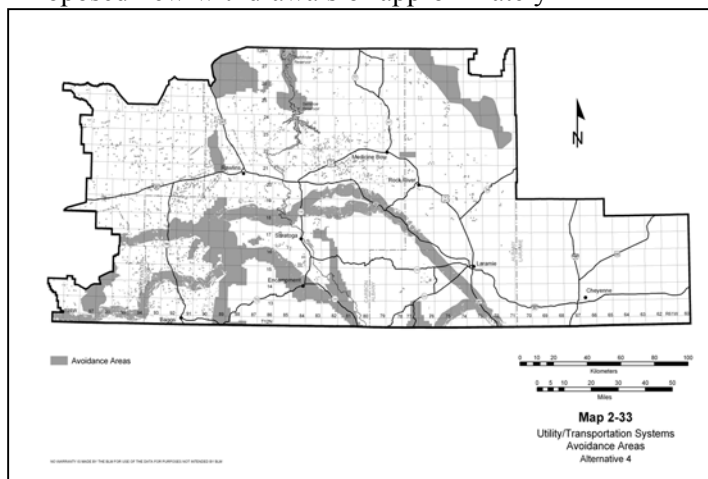
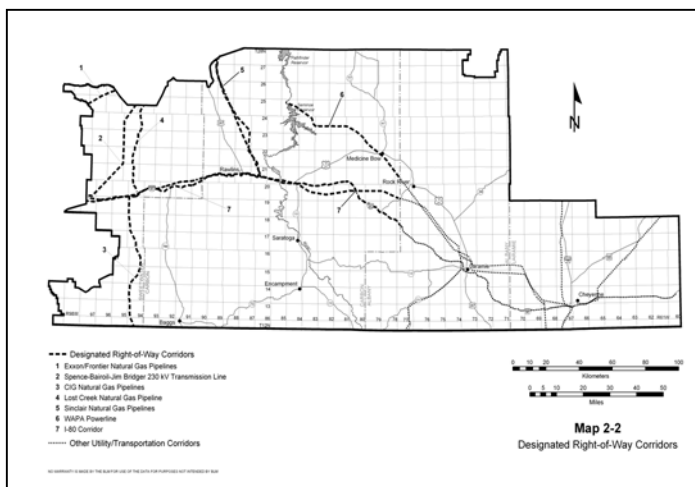
Fuels treatments, including prescribed fire, mechanical, chemical, and biological treatments, would be used to reduce fuels levels and meet other multiple-use resource objectives, including returning fire to its natural ecological role in the ecosystem. Wildland Urban Interfaces and communities at risk would receive priority for fuels reduction. Rehabilitation and restoration efforts would be undertaken to protect and sustain ecosystems, public health, safety, and to help communities protect infrastructure.

Forestry

Approximately 19,200 acres of commercial forest would be available for commercial timber harvest. All forest and woodlands in the planning area would be open to non-commercial harvest of minor wood products, such as fuelwood, posts and poles, Christmas trees, and wildings. Forest and woodlands management would also include manipulation of aspen, juniper, and other non-commercial tree species to meet forest health and/or other multiple use objectives. Forests and woodlands would be managed using natural processes, prescribed fire, and chemical, mechanical, and biological treatments.

Lands and Realty

Existing withdrawals in the planning area would remain in place unless it is determined they should be terminated. Such determination (and plan amendment) would be based upon full examination of the issues associated with withdrawal terminations, including the land use, environmental and other factors associated with opening public lands now closed to entry under the public land laws or to mineral location under the mining laws. Where appropriate and necessary to protect other resource values, new withdrawals would be pursued and implemented prior to terminating any existing withdrawals. Proposed new withdrawals of approximately



14,450 acres would be pursued.

All coal classifications protecting federal coal from mineral location on 671,768 acres in the RMPPA would be terminated because the classifications are no longer necessary.

Non-federal lands would be considered for acquisition to meet the objectives of the various resource management programs. The criteria for which lands would be considered for acquisition include in-holdings within WSAs, some SMAs, and HMAs.

46,000 acres of BLM-administered public lands meet the FLPMA criteria and would be available for consideration for disposal. The preferred method of disposal is exchange.

BLM-administered public lands within ¼ mile of the incorporated boundaries of cities and towns would be open to oil and gas leasing with an NSO stipulation and closed to locatable mineral entry and mineral material sales. Existing activities would be intensively managed.



All BLM-administered public lands, except WSAs and some SMAs, would be open to consideration for placement of transportation and utility ROW systems. Each system would be located adjacent to existing facilities, when possible. Existing major transportation and utility ROW routes would be designated corridors. However, major transportation routes within the RMPPA that are located east of the Carbon County-Albany County line would not be considered for ROW corridor designation because of the scattered public land ownership pattern in the area. Mitigation requirements for surface-disturbing and disruptive activities would be applied to activities related to utility/transportation systems to protect important resource values. Sensitive resource values would be avoided. Wind energy development would also be considered outside of avoidance areas.

Certain scattered parcels of land withdrawn for Seminoe Reservoir (2,000 acres) and the Savery-Pothook area (1,205 acres), currently managed by BOR, are being considered for revocation because they are no longer needed for the purpose for which they were withdrawn. BLM determined that the lands are suitable for return to public domain status. When returned to BLM administration, these lands would be managed the same as adjacent public lands.

Livestock Grazing

Current livestock grazing uses would be continued until monitoring indicates an adjustment is necessary. Monitoring would include coordination, consultation, and negotiation with grazing permittees. Requests for changes in season-of-use or kind-of-livestock would be considered on a case-by-case basis, and reviewed to determine range suitability and to evaluate potential impacts to both riparian and upland vegetation and other land resource uses. Grazing systems and range improvements would be designed to achieve and maintain healthy rangelands. New fence construction would be authorized to BLM standards. Existing fences would be modified according to current BLM standards where needed or as older fences are reconstructed.



Livestock grazing would be managed to provide for protection or enhancement of all resource values. The Wyoming Standards for Healthy Rangelands and Guidelines for livestock Grazing Management would be implemented when authorizing livestock grazing use and related activities within the RMPPA. BLM would work closely with operators to determine the most appropriate methods to achieve Standards and desired plant community.

Designated camping areas, wetland/riparian spring enclosures, sensitive plant species enclosures, some cooperative wildlife management areas, coal mines, and some oil and gas production facilities are closed to grazing. Domestic sheep and goats would not be authorized within nine miles of identified wild bighorn sheep habitat unless a natural or topographic feature provides an effective barrier. Conversions from cattle or sheep to domestic bison would not be allowed in areas of blocked federal surface land ownership.

Minerals

Oil and Gas

BLM is integrating the results of the Energy Policy and Conservation Act Inventory into its RMPs. EPCA inventory data is integrated into the Reasonably Foreseeable Development (RFD) scenario that predicts future mineral development within the RMPPA. RMP actions that apply to mineral resource development are evaluated to:

- Clearly present mitigation requirements necessary to reduce impacts of oil and gas operations on other resource.
- Ensure that such mitigation is either statutorily required or scientifically justifiable and is the least restrictive measure necessary to accomplish the desired level of resource protection.
- The mitigation requirements would be monitored to determine if more or less restrictive measures might accomplish the same goal.

Oil and Gas Reasonably Foreseeable Development for the 20 Year Planning Period.

Action	Total
Wells Projected to be Drilled	8,822
Miles of New Oil and Gas Roads	2,676
Acres Disturbed in the Short Term	57,545
Wells Abandoned	1,184
Well Sites Reclaimed	1,066
Miles of Roads Closed (Reclaimed)	500
Acres Disturbed in the Long Term	15,472

Oil and gas opportunity for leasing, exploration and development on 4,578,900 acres of subsurface fluid mineral within the Rawlins RMPPA subject to the following constraints:

Oil and Gas Classifications for Mineral Estate (4.59 million acres).

Classification	Acres
Open to leasing consideration and subject to standard lease form stipulations	853,690
Open to leasing consideration and subject to minor lease constraints such as seasonal restrictions	3,279,670
Open to leasing consideration and subject to major lease constraints such as no surface occupancy	377,590
Closed to leasing	76,950

Oil and Gas Constraints for Mineral Estate in High, Moderate and Low EPCA Gas Potential Areas (3 million acres)

		Closed	No Surface Occupancy
TOTAL		64,630	220,150
TOTAL (%)	High Oil & Gas Potential	1	16
	Moderate Oil & Gas Potential	53	29
	Low Oil & Gas Potential	46	55
Total of all mineral estate having either Closed or NSO constraints		284,780 (10%)	



Oil and gas lease stipulations may be modified or eliminated using the exception, waiver, or modification criteria outlined in this RMP. Stipulations that do not accomplish the desired resource protection would be changed based on monitoring or new scientific data.

All lands open to oil and gas leasing consideration also would be open to geophysical exploration, subject to appropriate resource surveys, surface protection measures, adequate bonding, and adherence to State of Wyoming standards for geophysical operations. Vehicular use for geophysical exploration purposes, including project survey and layout, is subject to OHV designations (see definition of OHV necessary tasks in the glossary).

Oil and Gas Disturbance

Private Wells	Private Acreage	Federal Wells	Federal Acreage	Total # Wells	Total Acreage
5,111	35,400	3,711	22,145	8,822	57,545

Coal

New applications for leasing federal coal are not expected during the 20-year analysis period for this EIS. Existing leases may be developed. The first two steps of the coal screening process (Appendix 8) were completed for federal coal lands in the planning area. Approximately 5,029 acres (containing an estimated 70.1 million tons of surface mineable federal coal) were unsuitable for surface coal mining. Approximately 56,240 acres (containing an estimated 2,388.8 million tons of surface mineable federal coal) were identified as acceptable for further leasing consideration. Applications would be considered on a case-by-case basis and the remaining steps of the coal screening process would be completed.

There are seven existing coal leases that are exempt from the coal screening process that are subject to existing lease terms. Development of existing coal leases within the Carbon Basin would be addressed in the cumulative impact section.

Other Leasables

With the exception of WSAs, the RMPPA would be open to consideration for leasing of oil shale and non-energy leasable minerals.

Locatable Minerals

Approximately 1,572,563 acres would be closed to locatable mineral entry. The remainder of the planning area would be open to locatable mineral entry.

Saleable Minerals

Mineral material sales are discretionary actions. Disposal would be considered on a case-by-case basis. Stipulations to protect important surface values would be based on interdisciplinary review of individual proposals.

OHV Use

The RMPPA is generally open to use of motorized over-the-snow vehicles. Checkerboard lands would remain primarily limited to existing roads and trails. OHV travel in Limited to Designated Areas (LDAs) would remain limited to existing roads and trails until a site specific analysis and transportation plan is completed for each LDA. Those areas that are defined as 'limited' may have seasonal restrictions or travel limitations to either existing or designated roads and trails, or any combination of these. Travel on parcels of public land not having legal public access would remain limited to existing roads and trails.

Off-Highway Vehicle Classifications

Classification	ACRES
Limited to either designated or existing roads and vehicle route	2,201,510
Limited to existing roads and vehicle routes (within checkerboard or other inter-mixed land ownership)	1,285,500
Limited to designated roads and vehicle routes and closed to over-the-snow vehicles	13,180
Seasonally closed to OHV use	14,060
Closed to OHV use	33,500

Motorized vehicle use in the Dune Ponds Cooperative Management Area (3,730 acres) would be limited to existing roads and vehicle routes on vegetated portions of the area and open to vehicle use on active dunes.

The Encampment River Canyon Area (about 6,010 acres) would be closed to motorized vehicle use, including over-the-snow vehicles, December 1 to April 30, to reduce stress on wildlife wintering in the canyon area. The Encampment River Trail would be closed to all types of motorized vehicle use year-round.

The Pennock Mountain (7,770 acres) and Wick Beumee (280 acres) wildlife habitat management areas would be closed to motorized vehicle use and human presence between November 15 and April 30, to reduce stress on wildlife wintering in the area.

OHV use to retrieve big game kills and to access camping sites would be allowed within 300 feet of existing roads and vehicle routes, except where roads and vehicle routes are closed.

Paleontology

Paleontological resources would be managed to protect their important scientific values. Area closures, restrictions or other mitigation requirements for the protection of paleontological values would be determined on a case-by-case basis. Collecting of scientifically significant vertebrate fossils by qualified paleontologists would be allowed by permit only. The paleontological and historical values for which the Como Bluff area was designated a National Natural Landmark would be protected.



Recreation Resources

Existing recreation sites would be maintained or improved to assure continued availability and use to the recreating public. Additional recreation sites would be considered for development based on demand and available opportunities. Developed and undeveloped recreation sites and the surrounding ¼-mile area (17,590 acres) would be open to oil and gas leasing with an NSO stipulation.



Developed and undeveloped recreation sites (9,660 acres) would be closed to locatable mineral entry, mineral material disposal, and operation of the public land laws, including sale. Within the ¼ mile surrounding these sites (7,930 acres), surface-disturbing activities would be intensively managed. Above ground facilities would be avoided.

The entire RMPPA would be open to dispersed recreation with the exception of specific areas that must be excluded to protect public health and safety or special resource values.

The west end of the Ferris Mountains (5,270 acres) would be closed to oil and gas leasing, locatable mineral entry, mineral material disposal, operation of the public land laws, and managed as VRM Class II in order to preserve naturalness and opportunities for primitive, unconfined recreation. Surface-disturbing activities would be intensively managed within the

Adobe Town fringe (31,510 acres) and the area would be designated as VRM Class II to retain scenic quality of the area.

Special Management Areas

Wilderness Study Areas (Encampment River Canyon, Prospect Mountain, Bennett Mountains, Adobe Town, and Ferris Mountains) are closed to all mineral development. Existing mining claims must meet the “non-impairment mandate” for WSAs. WSAs are managed according to the Interim Management Policy for Lands Under Wilderness Review, until Congress makes decisions on WSAs. OHV use within the Adobe Town WSA would be limited to





designated roads and vehicle routes. All other WSAs would be closed to OHV use.

ACECs (Sand Hills/JO Ranch, Blowout Penstemon, and Shirley Mountain Bat Cave) and Special Recreation Management Areas (Continental Divide National Scenic Trail, North Platte River, and the Rawlins OHV Area) would be managed to protect their intrinsic values which include unique, stabilized sand dune vegetation communities and wildlife habitat and habitat for an endangered plant and a cave system utilized by a variety of bat species. Management actions have been tailored to the specific needs of the above-mentioned areas and the resources present.

Special Management Areas

SMA	ACRES	PURPOSE
WSAs	67,730	To protect wilderness characteristics, WSAs managed to meet the non-impairment mandates of FLPMA - Manage lands in a manner so as to not impair the suitability of such areas for preservation as wilderness.
ACECs	16,960	To protect a unique vegetation complex and wildlife habitat and maintain balanced recreational opportunities Protect habitat for the endangered Blowout Penstemon Protect cave system utilized as habitat by a variety of bat species
WHMAs	160,710	To maintain the cooperative management of a variety of wildlife habitats while providing for other compatible multiple uses
SRMAs	5,060	To promote recreational values and enhance opportunities for public use
NNLs	2,660	To protect the geologic and paleontologic values for which the areas were designated

Surface-disturbing activities in Wildlife Habitat Management Areas (WHMAs) would be intensively managed to protect their intrinsic wildlife values. The majority of the WHMAs contain private land purchased by the Wyoming Game and Fish Department as well as federal lands and are managed jointly by the WGFD and the BLM. In some cases, seasonal closures to OHV use and human activity would protect unique habitats and big game crucial winter ranges.

Lands totaling 800 acres in the Big Hollow NNL and 160 acres in the Sand Creek NNL would be considered for disposal to individuals, organizations, agencies, or institutions that would manage these areas in accordance with their NNL status. Como Bluff NNL (1,700 acres) would be managed to protect the paleontological and historical values for which it was designated an NNL.

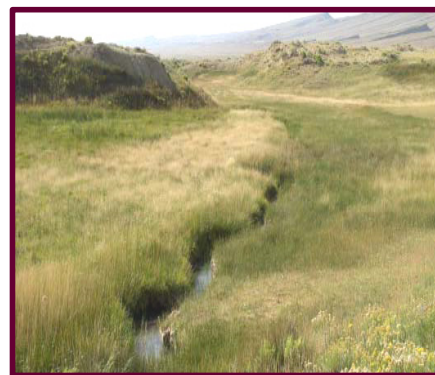
The Encampment River Potential WSR would be managed to maintain or enhance the outstanding remarkable values and classification. This WSR falls entirely within the Encampment River WSA, which limits consideration of developed recreation features.

Transportation and Access

The public land transportation system would be maintained or modified to provide for public health and safety and adequate access to public lands. Consistent with Wyoming BLM access policy, existing access would be maintained or expanded, new access would be pursued, and excess access facilities would be abandoned following consultation with local governments and interested parties.

Vegetation

The Wyoming Standards for Healthy Rangelands (Standards) apply to all resource uses on BLM-administered public lands. These standards are the minimum acceptable conditions for the health, productivity, and sustainability of the rangeland. The standards direct the management of public lands and focus implementation toward the maintenance or attainment of healthy rangelands. Rangeland areas would be managed to achieve desired plant community.



Populations of special status species would be fenced to protect them from grazing, trailing, or other disturbance. Known populations of special status plant species would be closed to locatable mineral entry and operation of the public land laws, including sale. Intensive management actions would be taken to protect unique plant communities. Unique plant communities would be closed to mineral material sales.

The fenced Gibben's beardtongue (*Penstemon gibbensii*) site (approximately 15 acres) would be maintained to protect the population from disturbance. Surface-disturbing activities would be intensively managed in mesic or wet meadows of floodplain areas in Laramie County, Wyoming, that contain habitat for the Colorado butterfly plant.

Aspen stands would be managed to increase distribution and improve seral structure.

Informal conferencing and consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service would occur for authorized activities that would potentially affect the habitat for endangered, threatened, proposed, and candidate plant species within the Rawlins Field Office.

Visual Resources

Visual Resource Management would maintain scenic value by managing impacts and intrusions through mitigation.

Visual Resource Management Classes (Acres)

CLASS I	CLASS II	CLASS III	CLASS IV
67,730	589,530	2,275,080	619,140

Water Quality, Watershed and Soils Management

Activities that would cause new water depletion within the Colorado River system would comply with the Recovery Implementation Program for Endangered Fishes in the Upper Colorado River Basin. Activities that cause existing or new water depletion within the North Platte River system would comply with Intra-Service Consultations covering the recovery of endangered species in the Platte River. Intensive management of surface disturbing activities would be implemented in watersheds contributing to water bodies listed on the State's 303d list of water bodies with water quality impairments or threats.

Surface discharge of produced water would not be allowed in the Colorado River Basin. Existing methods of produced water disposal in the Colorado River Basin, approved under existing land use plan decisions, would be allowed to continue as long as they do not exceed approved water quality or quantity limits.

Surface-disturbing activities would be avoided in; 1) identified 100-year flood plains, 2) areas within 500 feet of perennial waters, springs, wells, and wetland/riparian areas, and 3) areas 100 feet from the inner gorge of ephemeral channels.

Wild Horses

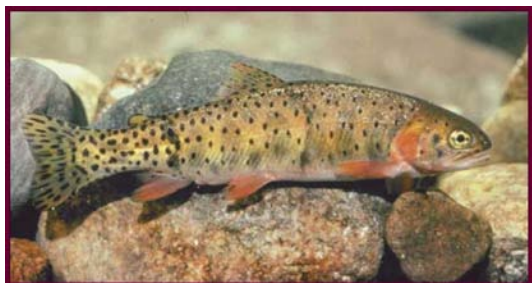
Periodic, (not annual) gathers will be the primary tool for population management in the Adobe Town, Lost Creek, and Stewart Creek HMAs. Appendix 12 contains a detailed description of the development, application, and interpretation of AMLs for the Rawlins HMAs.

AMLs in the HMAs would remain at: Adobe Town HMA - 700 adults; Lost Creek - 70 adults; and Stewart Creek - 150 adults. These AML levels were established in 1994 by extensive monitoring and evaluation (Map 2-21 and Appendix 11).

Through genetic testing and analysis, document the total extent of the “New World Iberian” (Spanish) genotype within the meta-population that includes the Lost Creek HMA. Implement the necessary management practices (including adjustment of the AML) to achieve the goal of maintaining the “New World Iberian” traits.



Wildlife and Fisheries



BLM would cooperate with the WGFD and FWS in considering and planning for the introduction, transplant, re-establishment, augmentation, and/or stocking of all wildlife and fish species regardless of threatened or endangered status.

Best Management Practices would be applied to surface-disturbing and disruptive activities to maintain or enhance waterfowl species and their habitats.

Impoundments and instream structures would be designed to minimize impacts on special status fish species and their habitats. Road crossings would be designed to simulate natural stream processes.

To protect amphibian species and their habitats, linear crossings, such as pipelines or roads across the above areas, would be considered on a case-by-case basis with intensive management to protect the above areas.

Informal conferencing and consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service would occur for authorized activities that potentially affect the habitat for endangered, threatened, proposed, and candidate species within the Rawlins Field Office. The Statewide Programmatic Biological Assessments and Biological Opinions authorized for each species, including all the reasonable and prudent measures and terms and conditions would be implemented for the RMPPA. For example:

- All white-tailed prairie dog towns/complexes greater than 200 acres in size and black-tailed prairie dog towns/complexes greater than 80 acres in size would be avoided, unless appropriate mitigation occurs.

- Where applicable, key linkage riparian travel corridors that may be used by Canada lynx would be enhanced or maintained.
- Fire suppression and forest conversion practices in areas adjacent to Canada lynx habitat would consider the habitat requirements for the lynx.
- Surface-disturbing and other activities located in potential mountain plover habitat are prohibited during the reproductive period of April 10 to July 10 for the protection of breeding and nesting mountain plover.

The RFO would implement recent BLM management direction regarding greater sage-grouse habitat and is consistent with the recent “Wyoming Greater Sage-Grouse Conservation Plan” which was developed by the Wyoming Game and Fish Department with a broad range of stakeholders. The plan proposes to maintain and enhance sage-grouse habitat through an implementation, monitoring, and evaluation approach. Best management practices would be considered to reduce both the direct loss of habitat and disturbance to sage-grouse during the critical breeding and nesting period. Surface disturbing and disruptive activities would not be allowed within ¼ mile of delineated sage-grouse leks. Human activity within ¼ mile of delineated active sage-grouse leks would be avoided between the hours of 6 p.m. and 9 a.m. Surface-disturbing and other activities potentially disruptive to sage-grouse would be avoided in identified nesting and early brood-rearing habitat between March 15 – July 15.

Surface-disturbing and other activities potentially disruptive to nesting raptors would be prohibited within distances and time periods necessary to allow raptors to complete breeding and nesting activities. Distances and time periods vary between ¾ and 1 mile and between February 1 and August 31, respectively, for different raptor species. Facilities requiring a repeated human presence would not be allowed within 825 feet (ferruginous hawks, 1200 feet) of active raptor nests.

Surface-disturbing and other activities potentially disruptive to big game crucial winter range would not be allowed during the period of November 15 to April 30. Surface disturbing and disruptive activities within big game crucial winter range would require the use of best management practices designed to reduce the amount of human presence and activity during the winter months.

Animal damage control (APHIS) activities, including the use of poisons lethal to vertebrate animals, would be considered.

COOPERATING AGENCY SUMMARY

The RFO extended cooperating agency status to the State of Wyoming, other federal agencies, County governments, and various Conservation Districts for the Rawlins RMP planning effort. These agencies were invited to participate because they have jurisdiction by law or could offer special expertise. A list of actively participating cooperators is included below.

- Carbon County
- Albany County
- Sweetwater County
- State of Wyoming
- Saratoga-Encampment-Rawlins Conservation District
- Medicine Bow Conservation District
- Little Snake River Conservation District
- Sweetwater County Conservation District
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

COORDINATION WITH NATIVE AMERICANS

As part of the scoping process, letters were sent to the Arapaho, Comanche, Crow, Eastern Shoshone, Shoshone-Bannock, and Ute tribes. The letters requested information to be considered in the planning process. As a result of these letters, the BLM received comments from the Ute tribe requesting that the BLM consider and protect cultural resources and sites sensitive to Native Americans in the planning document. Following the scoping process, a second letter was sent to all of the tribes listed above and additionally to the Northern Cheyenne. This letter more specifically requested information regarding any concerns the tribes might have within the RMPPA and presented the opportunity for meetings or field trips with representatives from the tribes. These letters were followed up with telephone calls. The need for the tribes to review and comment on the Draft EIS was also stressed in the letters and during the follow-up telephone calls. The Eastern Shoshone expressed concerns that the BLM consider cultural resources in the planning process and requested that the BLM continue to contact the tribes on a project specific level so that the tribes could provide input to sacred sites that might be impacted at that time.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Publication of a Notice of Intent (NOI) on February 25, 2002 announced BLM's intention to revise the Great Divide Resource Management Plan. A formal 60-day scoping period began on January 31, 2003 with release of the scoping notice. The notice announced the availability of the Management Situation Analysis (MSA) and invited input on issues, alternatives, and resource data. Public scoping meetings were held in Rock Springs, Rawlins, Baggs, and Laramie, Wyoming, on March 3, 4, 5, and 6, 2003, respectively. During the four scoping meetings, more than 80 people attended. Comments from the public were collected during the scoping meetings and throughout the scoping period through a variety of methods - mail, fax, email, and through the project website. Approximately 26,745 comments were received through the various methods. Comments were categorized by topic for analysis purposes. The category receiving the most comments was "Mining and Oil and Gas Development". A large number of comments expressed a desire for preservation over continued development. A major concern identified in the comments was disruption of big game migration corridors and the degradation of environmentally sensitive areas. The second category receiving the most comments was "Wildlife and Fisheries." A summary of all comments was then compiled and made available as the "Rawlins RMP Scoping Report, May 2003," which can be viewed at: <http://www.rawlinsrmp.com>.

The Rawlins RMP/EIS project website can be found at <http://www.rawlinsrmp.com>. The site serves as a virtual repository for documents related to RMP development, including announcements, bulletins, and draft and final documents. These documents were maintained in .pdf format to ensure that they were available to the widest range of users. The Web site also provides the opportunity for the general public to submit comments for consideration as part of the review process for the Rawlins RMP Draft EIS as well as add themselves to the project mailing list to receive periodic newsletters and announcements.